
Kingsley Plantation

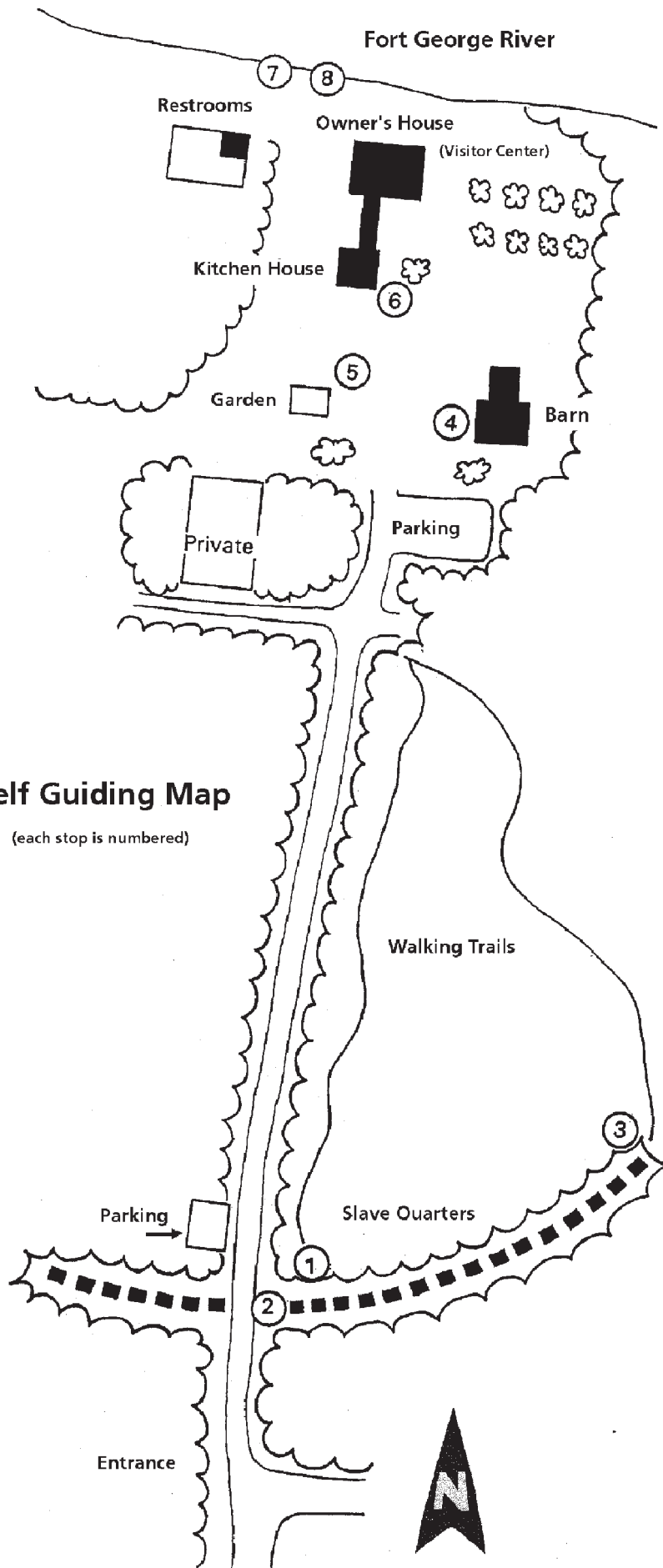
Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve

A Self-Guided Tour



This material is designed for elementary educational groups, but may be adapted to suit the needs of your group. *Questions at the end of the text may be presented to students to promote discussion. Answers may be found in bold print within the text to assist the leader.*





Self Guiding Map

(each stop is numbered)

Resource Protection

All resources, natural and cultural, are protected in National Park areas. This means all plants, animals, historic structures and objects must be left as you find them. The tabby structures at the slave quarters are very fragile. During your visit you will see evidence of deliberate abuse and vandalism, but visitors also cause damage accidentally. Help us preserve these historic buildings for future generations.

Please do not climb on any part of the structures or touch the walls.

Any found objects might have historic significance to the site, so please leave them where you find them and notify a ranger.

Safety

- Stay with your group
- Stay in the cleared grounds areas or on the trails
- Watch where you step!

Before You Start...

- Use chaperones to organize into smaller groups.
- Review the safety and resource protection messages listed above before leaving vehicles and continue to stress these during your walk.

Where to Start...

The entrance of Kingsley Plantation is at an area of the plantation known as the slave quarters. There is a small parking area at the slave houses. To start the walk at the slave quarters area (as we suggest), you may have students and teachers disembark here and have drivers continue down the road to the main parking area to park vehicles. (Drivers can walk back to the slave quarters to participate.)

The map on the previous page of this guide shows the suggested stops coinciding with the text. **Numbers on the stops in this guide correspond to the numbers on the map.**

STOP 1: SLAVE CABINS

The woods all around these houses (the whole of Fort George Island, in fact) was Kingsley Plantation. The plantation is named for one of several owners—Zephaniah Kingsley. On plantations, crops were grown to sell and make money for the owner. The cash crop at Kingsley Plantation, was Sea Island cotton. 175 years ago, when Zephaniah Kingsley owned the plantation, much of this wooded land would have been cleared and instead of trees you would have seen fields of Sea Island cotton and other crops. The people who worked in the Sea Island cotton fields and lived in these houses were called slaves.

A slave was a person who was considered property, and was owned by another person. Because slaves were property the owner could sell or trade these people whenever he wanted to, often separating families forever.

The slave was not paid for working — the slave was forced to work for the owner's profit. Enslaved people could not own anything, although they were given some things (clothes and other provisions) by the slaveowner. A slave could not come and go from the plantation without permission.

On Kingsley Plantation, ***many slaves worked in the field***, but the cultivation of Sea Island cotton was not the only work of the slaves. Enslaved people also did ***work in the house of the plantation owner***: cooking, cleaning, caring for the children, and other household work. Other slaves were ***skilled craftsmen*** and might include blacksmiths, coopers (barrel-makers), carpenters, and leather workers.

At this plantation, work was assigned to the slaves according to the ***task system***. Under the task system each slave had a ***specific amount of work to do each day***, called a task. The tasks might be 8 to 10 hours of very hard work, not easily accomplished. The older people and young children had assigned tasks as well, although they were generally given lighter work. Older women often cared for the youngest of the slave children while the parents worked their tasks. Children were often responsible for gathering firewood and plants from the woods for cooking, and doing other chores around the slave quarters or the planter's house. If the task was finished, whatever remained of the day was considered the slaves' time. ***Enslaved people could use this time to hunt, fish, garden or handcraft***. Products from these activities could be used to feed their families or be traded or sold.

QUESTIONS (Answers can be found in ***bold italics*** in previous text)

What is a slave?

Did slaves get paid for their work?

What other kinds of work did slaves do?

What is a “task”?

What activities might slaves choose to do for themselves - not for the plantation owner?

STOP 2: RESTORED HOUSE (Slave Quarters)

These structures are tabby, made from the oyster shells left on the island by American Indians. The ***enslaved people burned the shells to make lime, a chemical which they mixed with sand and water***.

They poured this “concrete” to make the walls in much the same way concrete is mixed and poured today. The wooden roofs and doors were added after the tabby hardened and dried. All of the houses had roofs when people lived here.

There were about 60 to 75 enslaved men, women, and children living in these houses. Many of them were born in Africa, others had parents or grandparents who were born in Africa. The African heritage of these people influenced many of their activities. Slaves might get cornmeal, molasses, salt and other basic provisions from the plantation owner, but in their gardens they could grow foods of their African cultures. Rice, okra, blackeyed peas, eggplant, and sesame were not originally American foods, but brought from Africa. Many dishes prepared in African styles became favorites of the plantation owner and slave cooking techniques influenced the tastes of the entire plantation. African cooking techniques include cooking greens and beans for a long time, flavored by small pieces of meat—does this remind you of American Southern cooking today? Crafts, such as pottery or basket making, might also reflect African styles and methods. Many of the traditions of the African culture were carried on in America.

Most enslaved people were not given the opportunity to learn to read and write (it was illegal to teach slaves to read or write in some parts of the United States, as this was considered a threat to the institution). But traditional songs, stories, or family memories were passed on orally to children. The music and religious expressions of the slave community were of their own culture and not that of the plantation owner. Some of the most beautiful American music came from the enslaved people and reflected their faith and hopes for deliverance. We call these songs *spirituals*.

QUESTIONS

What are these buildings made of?

Who built these houses and who lived in them?

Where did most of the slaves of the plantation era originally come from?

Students might discuss why literacy would be considered a threat to slavery.

STOP 3: EAST END OF SLAVE QUARTERS

If you look back along the line of slave houses, you will notice that the structures are not all the same size. *The larger ones might have been the houses of the slave foremen or shared for community activities.*

Another unusual feature of the slave quarters at Kingsley Plantation is the way they are laid out. Instead of a straight line, the *houses form a half-circle*. There is no documented evidence of the reason for this plan, but one theory is that they were all an equal distance from the planter's house.

Some of the houses appear to have been cut in half. An owner, long after Kingsley, had some of the tabby removed and used it to build a boathouse on the property. Today we realize that *important information about slavery and the people who lived here can be learned from these houses*. We try to protect the plantation buildings from further damage so that we can continue to learn.

QUESTIONS

What were the larger houses for?

What shape does the plan of the slave houses form?

Why is it important to protect the houses and not damage them?

A five minute walk down the trail will bring you to the main parking area. Remember to stay on the trail and to avoid disturbing any of the plants or animals that live here. To the right you will see the barn/stable.

STOP 4: BARN/STABLE

Please remember not to touch the tabby walls.

This barn/stable is made of tabby like the slave quarters structures. *The barn would have been used to store feed for the animals* that worked on the plantation and possibly cotton before it was shipped to

market. *Horses, mules, maybe even oxen* pulled plows, wagons, and provided power to operate mills. *Cows, pigs, and chickens would have been raised for food.*

There were other structures on the plantation that are no longer here. *The blacksmiths, carpenters, and other skilled craftsmen would have worked in workshops.* There was also a *mill* nearby.

QUESTIONS:

What purpose would the barn serve?

What animals would have been raised on the plantation?

What other kinds of buildings might have been here? For what purposes?

STOP 5: GARDEN

During the spring, summer, and fall there will be a garden plot of Sea Island cotton at this stop. Please do not walk in the planted area or pick the cotton!

Sea Island cotton was the cash crop at this plantation. Sea Island cotton is named for the islands along the coast of South Carolina, Georgia and northeast Florida where it grew best. It has a very silky and strong fiber and was very valuable. The plantation slaves grew the cotton, picked it, and then ginned (removed the seeds from) the cotton before it was shipped to market. *The cotton would then be sold to cloth manufacturers to be spun and woven into cloth. Much of our clothing today is made from cotton (blue jeans, T-shirts, etc.).*

The four marked posts in the garden area indicate the corners of a quarter of an acre. Plantation tasks (as discussed at Stop 1) for field workers were measured by the quarter acre.

QUESTIONS:

What was the cash crop of Kingsley Plantation?

What was the cotton used for?

Are you wearing anything made of cotton today?

STOP 6: KITCHEN

Indoor exhibit areas are open to the public and groups (limited to 20 at a time) are welcome to view the exhibits after the walk. (Children must be chaperoned.)

Cooking for the owner of the plantation was done in a separate building because of the danger of fire and heat. Accidental fires were most likely to occur in the kitchen because all cooking was done in an open fireplace. By having a separate kitchen, there was less chance of burning other buildings. Imagine the heat near the cook-fire in the summer! Keeping the heat away from the owner's house was another reason to have a separate kitchen house.

Slave cooks prepared the food, then it was carried up to the owner's house and served to Kingsley and his family.

Two wells are located near the kitchen house. *All water for washing, drinking, etc. was brought from the well.*

QUESTIONS:

Why was the kitchen in a separate building?

Who did the cooking here?

What were wells used for?

STOP 7: WATERFRONT

The front of the plantation owner's house faces the Fort George River which was the driveway to this island plantation. Most plantations were located along waterways because *transportation by ship or boat* was the easiest way to get crops to market or bring in supplies.

Zephaniah Kingsley was a wealthy landowner. He had other plantations in addition to this one. Documents show that he frequently traveled to his other property, as well as to other destinations.

A road in Orange Park, *Kingsley Avenue*, reminds us that Zephaniah Kingsley once had a plantation in that area. One of his other plantations was called San Jose. It was located in the part of Jacksonville that we call San Jose today.

QUESTIONS:

How did people travel to or from the plantation?

Can you think of any other places in this area named "Kingsley"?

STOP 8: OWNER'S HOUSE

Zephaniah Kingsley, his wife Anna Jai Kingsley, and their four children lived here. *Much of what we know about Zephaniah Kingsley and his family we have learned from his writings.* His will, a pamphlet he wrote about slavery, letters, and other documents are some of the things we study to learn about the Kingsleys.

Although most slaves did not learn to read and write, *some did and later wrote of their experiences.* Some told interviewers of their life in slavery and *their descriptions were recorded and published.* *Slave artifacts* (objects that were once the possessions of slaves) *have been collected from plantation sites.* These are ways we may learn of their lives.

Kingsley Plantation preserves a part of our heritage, symbolized by the people who lived and worked on

this plantation. Only by learning as much as we can about them can we form a picture of life on Kingsley Plantation.

QUESTIONS

How do we learn about Zephaniah Kingsley and his family?

How do we learn about the people who lived in slavery?

Walks conclude here (the front of the owner's house). You can learn more about the people of Kingsley Plantation in the visitor center and exhibit area, and from educational displays around the grounds. Groups entering buildings are limited to 20 at a time. Students must be chaperoned at all times. Next door to the main house, facing the river, are public restrooms. The rest of that building is not open to the public.

